Copy of Letter to Rev. G. Armstrong.

Geneva, Octr 9. 1843.

My dear Sir,

I received at Frankfort your kind letter, and should have sooner replied to it, but the rapidity of my journey has rendered it quite impossible. ~~You may be~~ It afforded me much ~~great~~ pleasure to ~~hear of th~~ hear of the deep interest which so many of the British Unitarians feel ~~have felt~~ in the ~~question~~ great question of Slavery as at present agitated in the United States, and ~~I have not~~ particularly in the relation which ~~of~~ their brethren ~~there~~ of like faith there ~~hold to that question.~~ sustain to it.

When I landed in your ~~coun~~ country it ~~was~~ certainly was with no expectation of being ~~ever~~ called publicly to express ~~among~~ in it ~~in public~~ my opinion of American Slavery. But ~~I had not had~~ it did not require a long ~~much~~ acquaintance with English Unitarians to convince me ~~before I perceived~~ that they were ~~not at all~~ not indifferent to the subject of Slavery in the United States; ~~but~~ that, ~~they~~ on the contrary, a ~~very~~ deep and inquiring interest was felt in it by many of them. I heard with much ~~no little~~ satisfaction that an eminent American Unitarian ~~preacher~~, while recently in your country, ~~amongst you~~, had had his ~~the~~ attention ~~subject~~ repeatedly called to this ~~great~~ subject. Under these circumstances, I could not but feel desirous that your opinions & views might be known in my own country; ~~[illegible]~~

~~of the [illegible] receive with attention respects~~.

Accordingly when, at ~~Taunton, I was desired to address the crowded Meeting, at~~ the time of the ~~your~~ annual Meeting of your ~~Western~~ W. E.^n Unitarian association at Taunton, I was desired to address the crowded evening Meeting, and the subject of American Slavery was particularly allotted to me. I ~~[illegible]~~ expressed the ~~my~~ wish of ~~they~~ those who were present, and of the Unitarians ~~of~~ of Gt. Britain generally, might address an ~~[illegible]~~ earnest appeal and ~~faithful~~ remonstrance on this subject to their ~~the~~ brethren in America. I said I had no doubt that such a remonstrance wo^d. be viewed by some as an overzealous act on our part; but that I believed the great body of American Unitarians would ~~receive~~ give it a ~~most respectful~~ candid hearing, and that with them it would do good. [I ~~knew well~~ was confident also, ~~well enough to know~~ that the spirit ~~of your~~ with wh. you w^d. put forth such an address, ~~[illegible] and faithful~~, would ~~be [illegible]~~ entitle it to such a hearing. ~~[illegible]~~ I believed that you ~~would~~ felt, as I did, that ~~England~~ Great Britain had too recently given freedom to her own Slaves to ~~allow~~ warrant ~~her~~ sons ~~to~~ in addressing their American brethren in ~~[illegible]~~ words of bitterness or taunting. ~~or denunciation~~.] I was ~~[illegible]~~ happy to find that the ~~opinion~~ wish I thus expressed met with a cordial response from very many present. — Subsequently, at a meeting in Glasgow, I ventured to repeat the same wish, ~~and expressing my sense of the~~ On my arrival in Dublin, it was with no small pleasure that

I ~~heard~~ learned that ~~an address, of a character similar~~
~~to that which I had had in mind, had already~~
~~been sent from the~~ the Unitarians there, ~~had~~
~~be already~~ without waiting for but a suggestion
from any one, had already acted in this matter,
and that a Committee of several gentlemen, among
whom were Rev. Dr. Drummond, and James Haughton
Esq. had prepared ~~addressed sent~~ an address ~~on the Slavery~~ on the subject of Slavery, to the Unitarians
in America, ~~[illegible]~~ & had sent it to the care of a
esteemed
Being much, ~~respected & beloved~~ brother in Boston +
in ~~[illegible]~~ Manchester, ~~[illegible] to the conclusion~~ it was with renewed satisfaction
that I heard of the progress which had been made in the preparation of a document of a more extended nature ~~[illegible]~~
~~Returning,~~ It has repeatedly been said to me
that, in order ~~to~~ that a document of the kind above
spoken of, might ~~would~~ be signed ~~[illegible]~~ with a proper un-
derstanding of the question at issue, some further
information was needed by the great body of Unitarians
in Gt. Britain. That information, in a thorough
and perspicuous manner, I do not presume to
think I can give, ~~at this distance from home,~~
~~and~~ without a single document or memorandum
at hand to which I can refer. But to some
points I can speak. Let me however just say ~~[illegible]~~ ~~It is the~~ that it is to me a most unwelcome
and ~~truly~~ painful task ~~for me~~, in my
absence from my native land, and from those
with whom I have associated and with whom
I have taken not only pleasant but most
profitable counsel from my youth, to ~~hold~~ dwell ~~[illegible]~~
upon what I deem her faults or theirs. ~~For I seem to look~~
~~most unwillingly on the blemishes and stains~~
~~on my country's character, and to see whatever~~
~~[illegible] in her character & institutions, set forth in strong~~
~~relief.~~

Moreover there is something in the very fact of uttering aught like reproof which savors of an assumption of superiority, ~~as~~ which I wholly deprecate & have ~~reason enough~~ cause enough to avoid. — would ~~avoid~~. GOD knows how truly I have honored, and still honor, many who, for some cause which I cannot satisfactorily to myself explain, have taken no interest or part in the discussion of this ~~great~~ mighty question touching ~~our~~ their brother's rights, ~~and~~ his happiness, his entire moral condition. GOD knows if ~~I~~ many of us have not allowed ~~that~~ our ~~any~~ respect for ~~those persons~~ these blind ~~me~~ too long ~~& too far~~ to their indifference this matter - involving as it does the essentials of y Christian character ~~& morals~~ involving as it does the giving or withholding of all the rights of humanity, all the blessings & hopes of religion, to millions of our fellow men in our very midst.

I do ~~indeed~~ believe that ~~the~~ American Unitarians (here speaking of them as a body) ~~and in general)~~ have been unfaithful to ~~their own~~ the ~~holy~~ religion, and untrue to those ~~great~~ principle of ~~Human Brotherhood~~ GOD's ~~and the~~ Paternal Charact ~~of God and the~~ His equal regard for all the Human family, and the~~ir~~ Brotherhood of Man which they have been wont to claim~~ed~~ as peculiarly characteri of their own faith — unfaithful to these in y. opposition or y. indifference they have manifested to y. Antislavery question. It w^d. be unfair in me not to ~~inform you~~ say here Sir that my very premises W^d. be denied, by ~~American~~ Unitarians generally, in America. The assertion there is common,

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and to be heard from the lips of nearly every one, We are no friends to slavery - We deem it a great evil - We are as much opposed to it as any one. So much as this, nearly every one feels it necessary to aver for himself. Assertions of this kind, however, as every one may see, are nothing worth, unless the word be supported by ~~the~~ deeds. And here I ~~maintain~~ believe that ~~the Unitarian~~ our American Unitarian body, in common with nearly every other so called religious body in the land, has ~~signally failed~~ been signally wanting. There has been with us, not perhaps a vehement and bitter, but still a strong & determined opposition to the introduction of the subject of ~~Anti~~ anti- Slavery, in any form, into ~~any of our bodies~~ the community. I have myself heard an eminent & influential Unitn. Minister express the wish that the subject of Slavery might never again be ~~introduced~~ a mentioned in the Association to which he belonged. [I have heard another declare that he shd. esteem the presence of a contagious disease in his town a less evil than the ~~introduction~~ of discussion of the question of Slavery.] For a long time, it was with great difficulty that any article of a ~~st~~ decided Anti Slavery character cd. ~~find~~ obtain admission into the Christian Examiner ~~or the Unitarian periodical or journal~~ and some such were refused. - A series of articles proposed to be furnished for the Christian Register (~~they were~~ ~~the only~~ then the only newspaper of the denomination) by a venerable and most amiable minister, ~~of advanced years~~, was ~~rejected~~ refused. He ~~was~~ is a man whose character & whose years both entitled him to be heard. ~~but the necessity, fear of consequences to the paper~~ sealed up its columns against him; and, what is worse even, this ~~disgraceful~~ violation of what Unitarians have ever professed to contend for & highly to value – ~~freedom of discussion &c~~ f. right of free discussion on moral & religious subjects – passed with but little notice and ~~even only a~~ with scarcely a rebuke. I rejoice to say that opposition of this character, in our body, to the antislavery Movement has very much passed away. The Christian Examiner is now quite liberally open to antislavery articles, None of its readers can have failed to be interested by the able articles ~~which~~ on different points of the main question of Slavery, which have appeared in its of late, from the pen of Rev. A. P. Peabody of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This is perhaps, ~~by very far~~ ~~then~~, the most encouraging feature in the present state of the question among us.

But ~~it has~~ not at any time been, ~~&c~~ as it seems to me, ~~for open~~ with active opposition to the Anti Slavery enterprise that Amer. Unitns. ~~have~~ ~~were most justly to be censured~~ are chiefly to be charged. Their great unfaithfulness has lain in this – that, with more ~~than~~ 2 million of ~~their brethren~~ fellow countrymen in Slavery, in a condition of utter degradation, bought & sold, worked, fed & treated generally like cattle, they have done nothing –*, they have refrained from lifting up the voice of righteous ~~rebuke and~~ condemnation of ~~so~~ the foul and ~~odious~~ wicked system, in the name of the religion they ~~professed~~ preach, and of the Master

*nothing to cause this national to be understood, repented of, & put away.

who ~~was~~ is dishonored & denied in the ~~[illegible]~~ outrages committed on his brethren. They have feared the agitation consequent upon a plain & direct utterance of Xn ~~truth~~ touching this thing - ~~mighty & wide spread evil~~ - and they have ~~forborne~~ failed thus to apply to this evil the great ~~& only~~ sovereign remedy which Almighty ~~Power~~ Wisdom has afforded - the truth as it is in Jesus. Abolitionists ~~believe~~ maintain ~~that~~ that truth, ~~faithfully~~ & perseveringly uttered and applied wd. cause, yea & will cause, this evil, gigantic as it is, to tremble, totter & fall. But how shall men hear this truth, if they who have vowed before God to be ministers of the religion of His Son keep it back? ~~and~~ if they manifest distrust of its effects?

I shall not be understood to say that this failure to apply y. ~~truth of Xty.~~ to y. ~~existing~~ Institution of Slavery among us, has been universally true of ~~English~~ American Unitarians. The names of Dr. Channing and Dr. Follen are well known in your country - not better known as Unitarians than as earnest pleaders for the outcast & despised Slave. Others too, there have been among us, and still are, not as well known with you, but well known ~~with~~ with us ~~for their [illegible] faithful labours~~ - not ministers only - but laymen - not men only but women, who ~~their~~ ~~who~~ have labored long & ~~untiringly~~ well, through evil report, and much ridicule, "and perils of false brethren, with ~~sometimes~~ even more tangible evidence of the "unpopularity" of the part they were ~~pursuing~~ espousing. - It is a

fact, which I hope I may be excused for naming
with something of a feeling of pride, that some
of the earliest, most ~~active &~~ unflinching, most ready
to give of their time, efforts & money, and every un
most trusty friends of the Anti-Slavery Cause have
been & still are Unitarians. But, in doing ~~than~~ ~~all these~~ the
have had no sympathy from their brethren genera
~~So far from it, they have had continually to~~ ~~with~~ ~~stan~~
~~them~~ ~~up against the face of their discouraging and~~
~~opposition, manifested their unfriendly influence~~
they have been looked upon coldly, and have not
escaped much open opposition.

With such exceptions as these, ~~to which I have~~
~~now adverted~~, I do believe ~~and maintain~~ th. ~~we~~
Amn. Unitarians ~~have been and are greatly~~
~~unfaithful to our Religion, and not less to whatev~~
~~there is peculiar in our views of Christianity~~
~~have been~~ & are ~~fully~~ chargeable with having done ~~few~~
~~nothing~~ nothing in comparison to their ~~power~~ & influence & ability ~~towards~~ to expose the true character of the institu
of Slavery amongst us, & towards its abolition.
It is true that there are ~~very~~ but few of our minister
~~who have not and~~ who do not, occasionally, once
or twice a year, it may be, bring the ~~subj~~ matter of Slavery
before their people, so far as to call it a great
~~moral & social~~ evil, to avow themselves its
enemies, and to express the hope that it may
be ~~done away~~ made to cease; but, as an
~~almost universal~~ general rule, so far as my knowl
& inquiry have extended, ~~such~~ this language has
been accompanied, as an offset, with a shar
rebuke of the Abolitionists, ~~so called~~, for their
vehemence, their intolerance, and their
ultra-ism, for in that word, I believe, ~~all~~
their sins may be ~~ind~~ summed up; & the effect of

which every one can judge. I ~~believe~~ have reason to believe that the effect of such ~~an~~ allusions to Slavery is to quiet, not to quicken, ~~their~~ the consciences. ~~concerning it~~. I do believe that, ~~under God~~ whatever of a sound & healthy public sentiment now exists among us, touching this subject, is owing, under God, to y. ~~faithful~~ persevering, ~~determined~~ fearless, utterance of Anti Slavery truth by those who have taken the scorned name of Abolitionists.

~~You~~ Some will doubtless think that it has been with good reason that their Amn. ~~Unit~~ brethren have distrusted and disliked what they have deemed the ~~the~~ vehement and uncompromising spirit of many Abolitionists. But these will doubtless ~~admit~~ feel that ~~surely~~ no such objections Cd. surely exist to y. Anti Slavery efforts & appeals of such men as ~~Charles~~ Wm. Ellery Channing, and Charles Follen. Alas! for ~~the~~ our true honor ~~of it~~ as a denomination. When Dr. Channing first made it known ~~that he espoused the essential principles of Abolitionism, when he gave evidence~~, by a timely and vigorous *act*, that he was not of the number who thought Slavery was to be brought to an end by letting it alone, that moment did the ~~previously~~ zealous admiration ~~personal regard~~ of many for him ~~for him~~ become cold. ~~I know that~~ This was ~~the~~ a common and very general observation ~~remark~~ at that time, made ~~with~~ by those who, living more ~~were~~ directly ~~than myself~~ in the circle of Dr. Channing's acquaintance, were ~~well~~ qualified to speak. ~~&~~ But, further, it is within my own knowledge that many of his ministerial brethren, and these among y. most influential, ~~among us~~, regarded Dr. Channing's espousal of the Anti Slavery cause as a *weakness* - an *ill-judged part* for him to take. ~~This I know~~; ~~and~~ Indeed an opinion to this effect was publicly put forth in one of our Journals, [referring to G. Putnam in ye Monthly Miscellany.] a regretting that Dr. C., by ye course he had taken, had ~~destroyed~~ parted with his ~~influ~~ moral influence ~~with~~ over so large a ~~part~~ of the Nation. Do not understand me to say that any one among Dr. C.'s ministerial brethren ever lost their respect for him, and their affection. ~~I cannot believe~~ ~~these~~ Respect and ~~affection~~ esteem cannot be withheld from any one, I think, who is believed to be ~~honestly~~ doing what he honestly deems it his duty to do. But, that Dr. C. was censured, privately & publicly, that deep regrets were felt & expressed, by Unitarians extensively, for what he did in the Antislavery cause, cannot be denied.

In noting ~~these few~~ as ye above facts, I have done, so far as time and circumstances allow, what I could to meet the request which ~~has been~~ has been so repeatedly made to me, yt. I wd. furnish some information upon wh. ~~our [illegible]~~ Unitarians in Gt. Britain cd. act in addressing ~~any~~ some communication to ~~you~~ their brethren of like faith in America on the topic of Slavery. I have endeavored to write no word wh. shd. not be ~~within~~ according to the truth. But I feel bound to add that I hope no one will act solely upon the ground of what I have written. It is but just that an opportunity should be given to refute any of my statements, should any one consider ~~them~~ ~~it proper to~~ it worth while to undertake ~~the~~ a refutation. I know not that I act wisely, ~~as the human wisdom is~~ ~~according to the wisdom which is~~ ~~too apt to guide us~~ in committing these few sentences to your charge, as you request, for publication.

Nor is less than this true of that other name ~~which~~ — also a sainted name — which I have written. No one knew better than Dr. Follen that, to espouse the antislavery cause, was to peril one's reputation for a sound ~~mind~~ & prudent mind, ~~or~~ was to peril one's ~~good~~ ~~opportunities~~ of share in the good will of ~~social~~ ~~[illegible]~~ the community at large, was to peril ~~his~~ one's opportunities of obtaining that, which no man ~~has~~ ever more truly merited than he, an honorable competence for himself and ~~his~~ his. No one, ~~I repeat~~, knew this ~~better~~ more than Dr. Follen; probably no one complained of it less.

I have felt unwilling in this communication to ~~speak of~~ introduce the name of any now living; save that I have done ~~so~~, in one instance, in allusion to the author of certain articles in the Xn. Examiner, where the name was already in fact publicly known. — Did I feel willing to do otherwise I could ~~gladly~~ mention the names of men, venerable for years, & for character who have not hesitated to espouse the Antislavery cause, and to utter its truth plainly.

So much, or rather so little, as this I of ~~this, I believe~~ — may say —

~~But I know this~~ that I would not, knowingly, say a word ~~[illegible]~~ unjustly to the derogation of my brethren. I do honor them; & I do honor & love the principles which they profess; ~~I have~~ and I also do desire that those principles may have free course; ~~[illegible]~~, that justice may be done to them, so far as man can do it, ~~by those who espouse them~~ and that it may be to the ~~honor~~ present & eternal praise of every individual ~~Unitarian~~ among us, that he has done what he could for the ~~[illegible]~~ subversion of every form of injustice & iniquity, and for the establishment of Christ's kingdom of righteousness & truth. Should you, our British brethren & friends, think it good (as I trust you will) to exert your unquestionable influence with us, in this regard, I believe you will have done a good work — that many minds will be found ready to hear and weigh well what you shall say;— ~~for~~ They will assuredly view it as the act

of friends, and they must view it as the act of men
~~those who are~~ free from ~~any~~ those local connexions which
~~might~~ are often thought to warp the judgment,
and give it an ~~party~~ exclusive or party bias.—

In passing ~~through~~ Berne, in Switzerland,
a few days since, I was much struck by a
simple motto inscribed over the gateway of one
of their charitable institutions — "Christo in
pauperibus". It seemed to me to be full of
the ~~very essen~~ very ~~essential~~ spirit of Jesus Chri
himself. How else can we show our gratitude
to him? what ~~else~~ can we do for him, save ~~but~~ to
recognise him in every brother man, and, f
his sake, to do what we ~~can~~ may that ~~every ma~~
~~may~~ our brother may be comforted & healed
and saved? "Inasmuch as ye do it unto
one of the least of these, my brethren, ye do it
unto me;"— "inasmuch as ye do it not unto
one of the least of these, ye do it not to me."

Whatever you may address to us, whatever
we may receive from you, may it be
offered and accepted in that one spirit,
which I cannot better express than by
repeating the words, "Christo in pauperibus.

Believe me, Dear Sir,
With the sincerest ~~esteem~~ respect
and esteem, Your friend
~~your~~ and Brother in the faith,
~~and your friend~~,

Samuel May, Junr.

To the
Rev. George Armstrong
Bristol, England

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